

PLYMOUTH PORTS STRATEGY

Appendix A - Overview



Introduction

This report provides an update on the development of a Plymouth Ports Strategy.

Plymouth City Council secured funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to undertake a study to understand the economic contribution of Plymouth's Ports and develop a strategy to support the future development including the transition to net zero and the creation of 'green jobs'. The Strategy covers the four harbours in the City of Plymouth, the Dockyard port of Plymouth (controlled by the Kings Harbour Master), Cattewater Harbour, Sutton Harbour and Millbay which is owned and operated by Associated British Ports'. Within these harbours there are numerous other significant marine operations and facilities.

The study has engaged with the harbour authorities to develop a detailed understanding of their existing operations and plans for future growth and with a range of stakeholders including port operators, marine businesses, key agencies involved in the management of the marine environment and locally active research institutions.

Summary of Findings

The first phase of work resulted in a baseline report which identified Plymouth's existing and considerable strengths in the marine sector in terms of infrastructure, research and development capabilities, skills and the marine supply chain. The ports of Plymouth are a thriving and highly evolved eco-system, supporting a diverse variety of marine businesses and are the cornerstone of the city's economy and also of regional and national significance. Some of the key findings of this work are as follows:

- The Ports underpin a marine and defence sector which employs 20,100 FTEs, representing 18% of the Plymouth workforce and 22% of the GVA of the City. Also, wages in this sector are well above the local and national average;
- More people work in Marine Employment in Plymouth than in any other Local Authority in England;
- The strength of Plymouth's port lies in its diversity. Whilst Devonport underpins the economic contribution of the ports and the marine sector to the city there is also a significant and diverse leisure sector, vessel manufacturing and servicing and freight operations;
- Plymouth is a leading light on marine technology, manufacturing and engineering which greatly enhance Plymouth's competitive edge in sectors with high growth potential such as autonomous vessels, Floating Offshore Wind and alternative fuels.

In addition to these strengths and opportunities the work has identified several weaknesses and threats including:

- The ports are operating at or close to capacity and opportunities for expansion are limited;
- The number and size of the wharves and the depth of water in key locations restrict the number and size of vessels against a backdrop of increasing vessels sizes;
- There are infrastructure and environmental constraints which will need to be addressed to support future growth and the transition to net zero;

The Plymouth Port Strategy, for the first time, documents and provides an insight into the broad range of activity which the Council is already undertaking to support Plymouth's Ports and a framework for further co-ordinated action. At the heart of the Strategy is a strategic vision which recognises and celebrates the qualities of Plymouth's ports and advocates for change based on evolution, building on current strengths to ensure that the Ports continue to thrive and to capture the expected growth in what is a highly dynamic and globally competitive sector.

Building on the data, themes and research conducted through the baseline work and stakeholder engagement the strategy identifies six opportunities which should provide a focus for the Council's future work with the harbour authorities, port operators, marine supply chain and stakeholders:

1. Invest in and develop maritime skills as a key enabler of future growth and to anchor the benefits of this growth in local communities;
2. Preserve space for the ports through further detailed work to determine future requirements;
3. Maintain Plymouth's expertise in innovation in marine autonomy, clean propulsion and digital ocean technology;
4. Foster communication and collaboration to promote Plymouth's ports and to identify and drive forward new initiatives;
5. Support investment in infrastructure to ensure that the ports remain competitive;
6. To recognise the significant role that the ports can play in preparing for net zero and the opportunity and benefits that this could deliver in productivity and job creation.

Supporting the future growth in Plymouth's ports underpins the growth in the wider marine sector which has the potential to create an additional 2,600 graduate level and highly skilled jobs by 2030.

Next Steps

The nature of ports is changing worldwide, and investment will be required to ensure that Plymouth maintains its current market presence and capabilities. Whilst the Council does not play a direct role in Port operations, it can and should play a significant role in supporting the future development and growth of the ports through advocacy, leadership, co-ordination and the creation of a supportive policy environment.

In summary, the strategy represents a starting point, a recognition of the vital role of Plymouth's Ports in the economy and the life of the city and a call for co-ordinated action to ensure that the Ports continue to thrive for the benefit of Plymouth and the wider regional and national economy. Flowing from this, there are four 'asks' of government to support the Council in its current and future work in support of Plymouth's ports:

1. Recognition of the importance of Plymouth's Ports and the fundamental role they play in the local economy and their significance for the wider regional and national economy.
2. Supporting marine skills development programmes.
3. Government funding for infrastructure development to ensure that Plymouth's ports are ready to play a role in the transition to net zero.
4. Support with the development of new regulations to support R&D for autonomous vessels.